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DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



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DRAMA

VOL. 9

JANUARY MCMXXXI

NUMBER 4

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By C. B. Purdom

THE Christmas plays have not started at the date on which I write; but there will be very little that is new to record. Mr. A. A. Milne's version of Mr. Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, which was first done in Liverpool last year, and a children's play, *The Land of the Christmas Stocking*, at the Everyman Theatre are the only approaches to novelty.

I have been interested chiefly in the past month by the work of the semi-commercial theatres. Three new enterprises of the sort have started, "The People's Theatre," for which Mr. J. T. Grein and Miss Nancy Price are responsible, embarked upon its career at the Fortune Theatre, with Mr. Anstey's farcical comedy *The Man from Blankleys*. The choosing of this play announced to the town that the People's Theatre was really to be a people's theatre in the widest sense of the words. Personally, I do not find fault with that. A theatre for Everyman naturally appeals to me. The theatre is the most popular of the arts, and a theatre in which the desire of the big public for art, as distinct from commercialised entertainment, is understood and respected as something worth having. Anstey's play is a good one. It has decided technical interest—remember the dinner scene in the second act—and had it been translated from the Russian would have been hailed long ago as a masterpiece of modernist drama. The play was well cast and produced, and hugely enjoyed by the audience. I hope this theatre will succeed; it will do so if it goes out for a new audience.

Another new enterprise is Mr. Maurice

Browne's London Theatre Company at the Little Theatre, which is intended for the production of unusual plays for short runs. The management offers a reduction from its prices to those who attend its productions regularly. The first play was a revival of *The Unknown Warrior*, which is one of the plays of the War likely to live; and its second production is a variety programme *Caviare*, but as the first performance was postponed for a week, I haven't seen it yet.

The third of the new ventures is the Faculty Theatre, to be discovered at the top of a new building in Piccadilly. This is a private theatre open to members only. It started not very promisingly with Strindberg's *Miss Julie* and Conrad's *One Day More*; the first a play depending upon virtuosity in acting and the second having no more than a reflected interest. The theatre did better with its second production, Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. This was a really capable production, though it did not reach greatness.

At the Arts Theatre Club, Zangwill's *The King of the Schnorrers* was given for a few performances. This powerful, incoherent, inconsistent and disappointing play seemed to be produced for the sake of the leading part, which was played with great enjoyment by Mr. Lewin Mannering. Some of the other actors did well. The play is a curiosity of dramatic literature, suited to a small or special audience, and not for general consumption.

The play that moved me most during the month was *Anthony and Cleopatra* at the Old Vic. Mr. Harcourt Williams surpassed him-

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

self in this production. He dressed it in Renaissance Italian, following Mr. Granville-Barker's suggestion, and he has been found fault with on that ground. But the play won't stand being Egyptianised, and Mr. Williams did the straightforward thing in dressing it the way he did. The dressing, however, well as it was done, was not the feature of the production: it was incidental. Mr. Williams concentrated on the acting and movement of the play. It is a play of unrestrained passion that brings about the destruction of beauty and manhood. If it were not for its poetry it would be unbearable. There are no "sympathetic" parts. There is humour and irony, and love that causes us to wonder, but not to admire. Yet the play as a whole is one of the most human of all Shakespeare. He must have written it out of experience. Here is something of which we all know a little brought to the extreme of what human nature is capable. The play therefore makes tremendous demands upon the actors. Mr. John Gielgud and Miss Dorothy Green gave performances that gained our applause. They worked intelligently and gave themselves without stint to the play's demands. I know that they could

both be criticised, mainly because of too much naturalism in their playing; but for once I am content to praise them. They did not deprive us of the play's poetry and the enthusiasm their playing aroused was deserved. The Old Vic. is to-day a centre of Shakespeare production of which London should be proud. It is inferior to nothing that is being done anywhere.

To wind up, there was Mr. C. B. Cochran's *Ever-Green* at the reconstructed Adelphi Theatre. What a contrast to the Old Vic. Shakespeare. One is all economy, and the other all extravagance. They both have their place. If Mr. Cochran did not know his business so well we should say that he throws money away for the sheer pleasure of it. He brings on so much talent that we get no more than a taste of anything. The name is, of course, highly sophisticated, and depends as much upon the adroit use of impropriety as upon other merits. But it has dancing, acrobatics, humour, and pretty girls in abundance. Also, as I have said before of Mr. Cochran's shows, it has brains. The production and staging is often exceptionally good, and full use was made of the new revolving stage.

AN INDIAN CLASSIC ON THE ENGLISH STAGE

By R. K. Jainik

OF all the Indian classics, adapted to the European stage, *The Toy Cart*, under the name of *Vasantasena* (the heroine), has been most popular. Mantzius wrote in 1903: "Rückert transferred the Indian lyric spirit to German poetry, and Gérard de Nerval—the super-romantic poet—attempted, though without success, to interest Parisians in the very play which of late years, under the name of *Vasantasena*, has made its triumphal entry on to most European stages." It was played in the 'nineties at the Royal Court Theatre in Berlin, as well as at the Court Theatre, Munich, "where it roused enthusiasm sufficient to recall the actors eight times before the Curtain."—(R. W. Frazer).

The reasons for its popularity are not far to seek. To enjoy *Uttararamcaritam* or *Sakuntala*, in which Goethe found "heaven and earth expressed in one name," an average European

mind needs a genuine appreciation of Eastern ideals, scientific music, dancing and mimic acting, along with the ready acceptance of the customs and conventions of oriental civilization. One has got to exercise a little patience to admire the characteristic delicate and subtle charm of situations where external nature and supernatural agents play interesting parts in human affairs. Such an effort, however, is not required in the case of *The Toy Cart* of Sudraka (First or Second Century A.D.), for it "has movement enough and is sufficiently realistic to be easily adapted to ensure a favourable reception into an English theatre."

All eminent critics have paid a glowing tribute to this deserving play. Nearer to the domestic drama type, it is said to escape "a certain monotonous harmony and laziness"; and is lovelier, more inventive, more varied, more vigorous, with characters more human

AN INDIAN CLASSIC ON THE ENGLISH STAGE

and humorous than others. It has an extra amusing incident in which a burglar sets forth the principle of "robbing as a fine art" (omitted by Arthur Symons). Most perfect on the stage, giving a graphic picture of social life in medieval India, treating *Vasant-sena* "as a refined courtesan like Aspasia of Greece." The action maintains the unity of interest throughout, for with great ingenuity every apparent interruption is made subservient to the common design.

Despite all this, the Indian classic was produced only twice by the Stage Society in London, thirteen years ago. Similarly, the masterpiece of Kalidas has rarely been produced, only Norwich amateurs producing it this season. It was, therefore, with deep interest that I was looking forward to this production of *The Toy Cart*, by Mr. Franklin Dyall, at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, on November 15th. For the first time, it was given for a regular run by a professional company composed of several "stars." Yet, as the irony of theatrical life would have it, it had to be withdrawn only after nine performances.

The stage version of the ancient classic by Arthur Symons is a model piece in itself. With wonderful sympathy and insight he has seized upon the essentials and woven an artistic whole for "two hours' traffic on the stage." The original ten acts have been reduced to only five short acts. The first wife of Charudatta has been removed from the play. The comedy of errors arising from a confusion of two chariots has been omitted to suit the modern stage requirements. In keeping with the ancient tradition, the elements of dance and music have been stressed. The original main story of the triumph of right conduct over the wickedness of judicial inquiry and villainy of the king's brother-in-law tells itself naturally, in a simple, dignified manner with an excellent use of oriental flowers of speech.

The play was ably presented by Sir Nigel Playfair and artistically produced with deep affection by Mr. Dyall, who has loved this piece as his "own pet child" for the last thirteen years. His Charudatta was exactly in harmony with the spirit of the original. Those who do not know the dignified Hindu Brahmin at his best argue that he should have been more at home in the lyrical passages with his beloved. He was supported by a brilliant cast. His

companion, Maitreya, was the buffoon of the piece, but with the singular devotion worthy of Lear's Fool. Arthur Hardy was admirable in every respect, but if he had been a little more eccentric, perhaps his shrewd remarks would have made the humorous impression on the audience, which it often missed. Prince Samsthanaka was faultless to my mind. He could have been a trifle more sensuous and rhetorical to impress the spectators; but, as Ronald Simpson acted, he did the fullest justice to the original wherein he is depicted like Cloten in *Cymbeline*. He is a wicked fool. There is no deep passion in his bosom. He simply acts most waywardly on impulse, loving and hating Vasantsena at the same time, and making the most of a few expressions like "his meanest garment" in Shakespeare. The Judge, the mendicant friar, the first Chandala, and the gamblers, did very well.

But what about the women characters? Margaret Yarde did her part splendidly; and her "monotonous wickedness" is not in accordance with the spirit of the original, but the development of the adapter for dramatic concentration. The heroine, Madeleine Carroll, indeed, lent her beauty and charm to the piece; but she could not triumph over her inherent limitations for the rôle of a most accomplished Hindu dancing girl. Here was the rub. Although she tried her level best she could not dance that dance of the heart of her lover, with which the hearts of the audience could have also danced. Neither could her sweet voice rise to a pitch of overflowing musical ecstasy which would have filled the minds of the hearers. Thus in the second act she failed to rise to high expectations. In the other acts, however, she was admirable.

The atmosphere of an oriental play was created by the burning of incense, an oil lamp, a short prologue, a few typical stage-properties with cushions and canopy, but most of all by the fine scenic design of Laurence Bradshaw, who spared no pains. The ancient Indian stage was generally unlocalized, and curiously enough, partook of the many characteristics of the Elizabethan stage. Keeping an eye on the ancient scenery, costume and properties, just the necessary touches were given for a modern European production, as it is done at "the Old Vic." for staging Shakespeare to-day. Of course, to fire the imagination of

AN INDIAN CLASSIC ON THE ENGLISH STAGE

the audience who did not care for classic simplicity, perhaps, more warmth and colour should have been freely given in the second act, in the palace of the first courtesan of the capital (Ujjaini) of the Indian empire; and an extra half an hour devoted to diverse types of dancing and musical entertainment.

With all its limitations, the piece ought not to have failed in London. Then why did it? The critics, obviously, set aside the golden rule of Schlegel to judge a piece by identifying themselves with the people and time to which it belongs. They, of course, could not help judging only from the surface, for they were complete strangers to oriental classics. Still, I expected that some of them would give a lead in the line of the right perspective. So far as the audience was concerned, they were in the dark about the piece and there was no tradition behind them, built on the genuine repertory system which would include all that was

best in the world's dramatic literature. They say, 70 per cent. of the audience, now, is composed of the fair sex; and in an age when girls if they are "allowed," are "washing their hair" for daring and sensational farces, with the inevitable bedroom scenes, craze for evening fineries, and the like, it is no wonder that people are not in a hurry to book for Hammersmith to see ancient classics, with a lofty moral aim and healthy humour.

But, I do not despair. When England has a National Theatre of its own, an enlightened audience interested in the best the world has to offer will spring up; oriental plays like *Mudrarakeshas* and operettes like *Vikramorvasi* will also be appreciated, along with the more known ones; and the stars of the East, and West, will find a happy conjunction of "the Milky Way," when the one lover will be able to fathom the heart of the other.

WRITING A ONE-ACT PLAY

I. THE DIALOGUE

By Edward Lewis

IT is my privilege—sometimes my pain!—to read many one-act plays written by amateurs, often by beginners; so that by this time I know the stumbling-blocks pretty well. The snags are all over the place. If you don't trip up in the matter of dialogue, you stumble over some point in the construction of the plot; if your construction is good, you come a cropper in the suggestion of character; and if you do not trip in any of these things, it is probably because you are standing still, and your play does not move, doesn't come to life—which, of course, is the worst fault of all, and quite fatal.

It may help if we examine one or two points where you are likely, unless you are adept, to go wrong. Let us begin with the dialogue.

The first thing you must remember is that you are not alone. Even when you are sitting in your garret, burning the midnight oil, with the towel round your head and a blanket round your knees, you are not alone. There are three of you. There is you, and your actor and your audience. You are not going to do

the thing off your own bat. If you imagine you are, you will make your first mistake. You will over-write your play; it will be acted badly; and it will bore your audience. If you don't leave these other two something to do, how can you expect them to be interested?

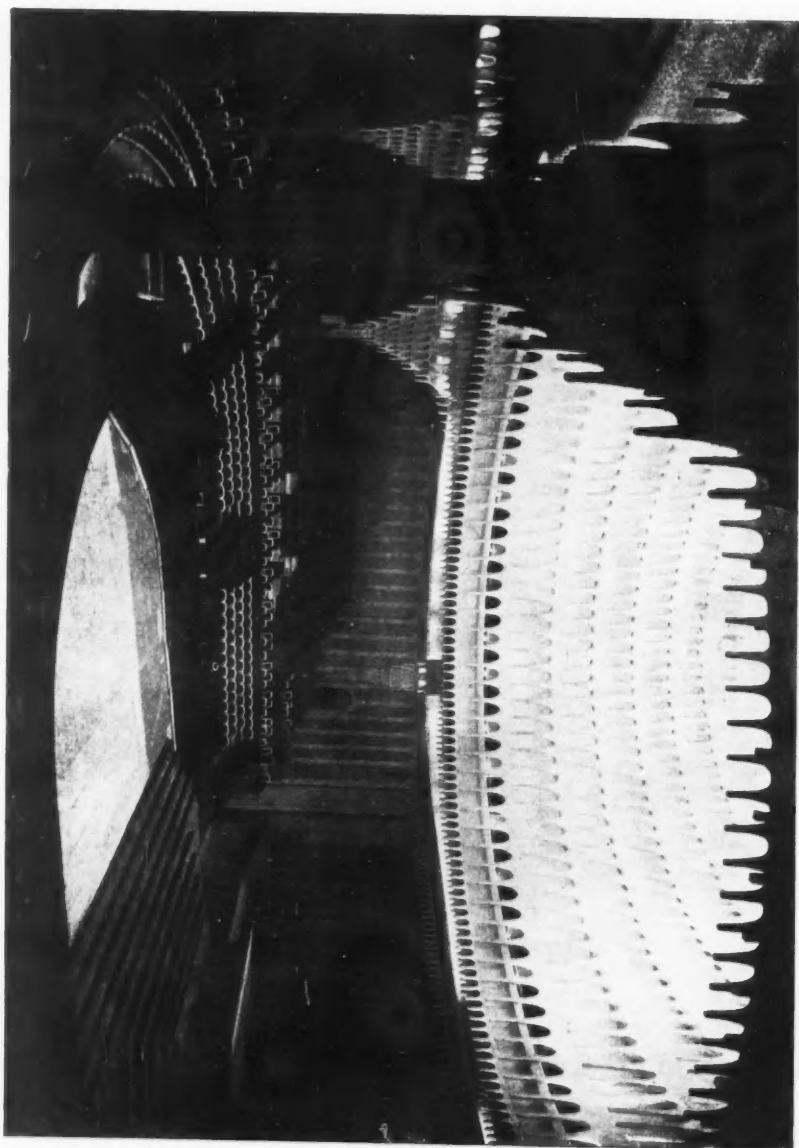
You must assume that your actor can act, and that therefore he will want to act. The more chances you give him of acting, the better he will act. The heavier the burden you put upon him, the more likely he is to rise to it. If on the other hand you put everything that is necessary into words for him, he will be nothing but a reciter, and might just as well be a loud speaker. Never put into words what your actor can convey just as well by a look, a gesture, a movement on the stage, or by the intonation of his voice. As you write your dialogue think of him acting his part. Never use two words where one will do; never use one where none are necessary.

You must assume, too, on the part of your other conspirator, the audience, a certain amount of intelligence. Give them something



"CRAIG AND COCHRAN,"
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WRITING A ONE-ACT PLAY

to do. Leave something to their imagination. It will keep them awake. As a rule an audience is pretty quick on the uptake. They do not want everything down to the last button explained to them. Give them indications, hints, pictures, rather than explanations. They are quite capable of filling in the gaps. It may even happen that the play as they are imagining it, is better than the play as you have written it—which is all to the good.

The majority of plays nowadays, perhaps, purport to be plays of "real life," and the writer may think that he has made a hit if he makes his characters speak exactly as they would do in "real life." Usually he will have made a howler. I was reading a play the other day which was full of dramatic point and situation, but was quite spoiled by the evident determination of the writer to allow his characters to speak exactly as they would have done in their kitchen at home, or in the street. It was prolix, blurred, low-levelled, duff stuff. Take for example, a verbatim report of one of the more or less informal discussions you can hear any week on the wireless, and compare with it a discussion in one of Bernard Shaw's plays. The discussion in the play appears to be just as easy and natural as the other. That is Mr. Shaw's art. And that is the art which is demanded of you, namely, that you should write artificial conversation, well-trimmed, well-shaped, which, with the help of your actors, has every appearance of being natural conversation. At bottom, I think, it is a question of the choice of words. In ordinary conversation people do not as a rule choose their words, they speak as it comes into their heads; in dramatic conversation you choose words which, while they fall naturally and easily into place, are such as create atmosphere, suggest character, and keep the action of the play moving along. It isn't easy. If it were easy, we should all be in the same boat with Mr. Wallace or Mr. Sherriff!

There is, of course, much more to be said; but if the two main points I have mentioned could be successfully negotiated most of the plays I read from time to time would be improved out of all recognition.

These points, which are important enough in writing a full-size play, are additionally important in a one-act play, because of the shortness of time. In, say, half an hour, you have to make each of a group of people come to

life, and a scene to come to life. You fail, if you don't. Therefore, you haven't a moment to lose. You cannot afford a single redundancy, a single unnecessary explanation, a single literary flourish, a single word which does not somehow help the action along and reveal character. It demands practice and hard work—courage, and the blue pencil! And, by way of combining business with pleasure, read and study the plays of masters in dialogue; Bernard Shaw, for example, or Ibsen, or Galsworthy.

"THE ARCHITECTURE OF PLEASURE"

Under the above title Mr. P. Morton Shand has written an interesting survey of the architectural treatment of the modern Theatre and Cinema. It is published by Messrs. Batsford, and at 15s. net, the illustrations alone make it worth the price. There are over 120 of them, and the subjects range from famous interiors like that of Reinhardt's Grosses Schauspielhaus in Berlin, (reproduced elsewhere in this issue), to the most advanced and extravagant examples of cinema construction.

"Extravagant" is perhaps not the right word, for the present trend is towards an austerity of line and mass which is exemplified, in England, by the exterior of the new Victoria Cinema in London, or, less ambitiously, by cinemas at Twickenham and Sevenoaks.

One of the most charming designs is the front of the Ufa-Cinema in Berlin, where neo Baroque embellishment is found to be strikingly appropriate to a façade otherwise severe.

Mr. Shand writes with gaiety and point, and his book is a plea that all places of entertainment shall bravely flaunt their purpose to the world, not masquerade as private dwelling houses, hotels, or offices.

We fear that the witty analysis of the popularity of the cinema will scarcely re-inforce the faith of those who hope for a serious future for the "Movies." If Mr. Shand is right, D. H. Lawrence, we feel, in that much discussed pamphlet of his, was even right.
G.A.W.

WHY HIDE OUR DRAMA?

By Inquisitor

THE foreigner who runs through London may read the lesson of English dramatic supremacy. Any and every English man or woman of the world who examines, however casually, the dramatic fare of the Continent, swiftly rejects the long-alleged assertion of European theatrical excellence *vis-a-vis* the London stage.

Satisfied by a former military and economic supremacy, the Englishmen of earlier generations were content to allow our repute in the sphere of art to languish, with the result that we came to be and still are regarded abroad as Philistine of the Philistines.

Europe snatches at our plays, admitting a grudging approval of our *literary* output, but ignorantly scorning our *theatre*. Wilde, Shaw, Maugham, Galsworthy, Sutton Vane, and Edgar Wallace, find more or less reasonable presentation in countless European playhouses. This, however, is in the normal course of purely exploitative business. It has nothing to do with any recognition of British dramatic authorship and *mise-en-scene*—still less, of course, with the art of acting as perfected by our English School.

It is here that we come to the crux of the matter. Why should not the Continent be shown the excellences of our stage? For how long are we as a nation to be content to allow the foreigner who has not had the good fortune to make a survey of Shaftesbury Avenue and the Strand, to believe us uncultivated barbarians, indifferent to our great dramatic heritage of the past and lacking any contemporaneous theatrical artistry?

English acting to-day compares not unfavourably with that of Germany, Central Europe, Scandinavia and the French stage. Our output of plays is proved by its universal popularity to compare on more than equal terms with that of any foreign country. The style and technical efficiency of our *mise-en-scene* is generally speaking, superior to that of other capitals.

Yet while Italian, German, French and even Japanese companies visit England, no representative company of West End actors has been sent out systematically to tour the capitals of Europe and the world.

This is the more regrettable when one considers the admitted value in terms of national and commercial propaganda of such

artistic ventures. As a trite example one may quote the world-wide influence of the Hollywood film. More subtle—but no less persuasive—is the influence of Wagnerian and Italian opera. Indeed, as a civilised community Great Britain is probably the only state which does not directly or indirectly enable in other countries the advancement of its propaganda by aesthetic means. Of such means we possess inestimable advantage in our theatrical wars, more especially now that our language is rapidly becoming the second tongue of practically every other land.

Certainly a large foreign public exists ready to welcome the performance in English of first-rate modern representative works of English comedy and drama. But the plays must be presented in the best tradition of the London theatre, and be performed by artists of real eminence in their several lines of work, produced by a master of stage-craft. Anything less than this is worse than useless. Unfortunately, too, it is by very much less than this that the British theatre has been made known to the foreign public since the war. A very few ventures of London managements to some single Continental *venue* on some particular occasion have been arranged, but no effort has been made to show to Europe our theatre in its habit as it lives.

From the viewpoints of both finance and organisation this matter is difficult, but the difficulties are not insuperable. It is, however, questionable whether operation on any extensive scale is possible without extra-theatrical or even State guarantee or subvention. But that such an exemplification of British theatrical art, with its social, literary—even political—implications, would be of great value to our international prestige at the present time, no one familiar with Europe to-day, least of all our diplomatic and commercial representatives abroad, will deny.

A PUPPET SHOW

We illustrate in this issue the poster of the Gair Wilkinson Puppets which are performing till January 10th, at the Queens' Gate Hall, South Kensington. This is an admirable show, and will delight all those,—young or old—who see it.

"THE SMALL-PART HOAX" AGAIN

IN the November issue of DRAMA, Mr. W. J. Irvine denounces what he calls the "make-the-most-of-a-small-part" theory. There is no possibility, according to his view, of making anything of a small part, or of learning anything about acting by playing it. The theory is merely a hoax perpetrated by the fortunate few with the big parts on their less fortunate fellows in order to secure the necessary background for their own performances.

Mr. Irvine instances an experience of his own in support of this contention. He describes how, in a play of Euripides, he was cast for the "small-part" of a Taurian soldier, in which he had not a single word to say, although he was on the stage throughout the whole play. All he had to do was to stand at attention with a shield in one hand and a spear in the other. What, he asks plaintively, could anyone make of such a part?

The answer obviously is — "Nothing." But the instance is not a fair one. Whatever it may have been called, that Taurian soldier was not a small part, or a part of any sort. For that play at least Mr. Irvine was merely a "super," which is something very different from an actor playing a small part, though even so I would suggest that he had the opportunity of standing like a real soldier or like an awkward civilian dressed up in an unaccustomed garb.

As an amateur producer I hold the "make-the-most-of-a-small-part" theory very strongly. I believe it is possible to make a big hit in a small part, and to learn a great deal by playing one.

As an example of such a part I will instance that of Lieutenant Spicer in Barry's *Quality Street*. The actor here has only nine speeches to deliver, the majority of them less than one line in length, and the longest only seven lines of rather large type. Yet in the performance of a skillful actor these few words reveal the whole soul of the subaltern officer, as he was, as he is, and as he will always be as long as subalterns exist.

In the same play occur Charlotte Parratt, the Recruiting Sergeant, Isabel, and Arthur Wellesley Tomson, all very small parts indeed, but each a perfect little character study and offering every opportunity to the player.

Quality Street is particularly rich in small parts, but there are other plays almost as

fruitful. In *Milestones* there are Gerald Monk-hurst and Richard Sibley, in *Young Woodley* Mr. Woodley and Cope, in *Berkeley Square* the Duke of Cumberland and the Duchess of Devonshire, the latter a very small part, but one which an actress of the calibre of Marie Lohr did not scorn to play. It would be easy to multiply instances.

Of course, all the parts just referred to are excellently written, and it may be objected that the small part does not by any means always afford the same chances. This is true enough, but I maintain that there is no speaking part which does not provide the player with some opportunity of showing what he, or she, can do.

In Milne's *The Truth About Blayds*, Parsons, the maid, has only three speeches. They are as follows:—

Seven, sir.

Madam said seven, sir.

Yes, sir.

Not very hopeful-looking material certainly. But three years ago I was producing this play. The actress cast for Parsons was practically an unknown quantity so far as the stage was concerned. It was at the dress rehearsal, and at the second speech, "Madam, said seven," that I suddenly sprang to attention. Voice, attitude, everything was quintessential parlour-maid. I was not the only one who noticed it. More than one member of the cast commented upon the fact, and after the first performance one of the reporters wrote in his paper that he hoped to see this actress again in a part more worthy of her obvious talents. I gave her a lead in my next production.

I think this little incident is sufficient by itself to show that the small-part theory is not a hoax. At the same time I agree with Mr. Irvine that it would be better training for the beginner to play big parts. But how is this to be arranged? Most Amateur Dramatic Societies have to consider their box-office receipts. For this reason they are obliged to put up the best show possible, and that means they must put players of proved ability into the big parts. The only way for beginners to win promotion is to gain their experience and prove their worth in small parts, and I claim that I have shown conclusively that this can be done.

H. N. GIBSON.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

President :
LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN.

Chairman of the Council :
H. GRANVILLE-BARKER.

Secretary : GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

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Telephone : TEMPLE BAR 8507-8.

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

THE correspondence arising on Mr. Terence Gray's first letter, published in the October number of *DRAMA*, has revealed some misconceptions as to the fundamental objects of the British Drama League. Pioneers and experimenters have every right to be assured that the League is sympathetic with their work, but it would be disastrous if, in evincing this sympathy, the League should find itself identified with a *doctrinaire* preference for all that is "new" and therefore "blessed" as against all that is "old" and therefore "damnable." We recognise that Mr. Gray himself avoids the horns of this dilemma. He seeks the renaissance of a venerable tradition of stage-craft quite as actively as he seems to desire innovation for its own sake. His policy, nevertheless, if exclusively followed, would, in our opinion, hinder as much as it would assist the general development of our movement, which includes every phase of the dramatic impulse, provided only that it be inspired by sincere artistic feeling.

The suggestion that the League has ever proved antagonistic to the school of thought for which Mr. Gray stands cannot, we feel, be substantiated. Does he not remember the part which the League played in bringing about the International Theatre Exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1924? It has also been our privilege to publish in *DRAMA* many reproductions of the most advanced stage designs; and the work of the Cambridge Festival Theatre itself has always received our friendliest attention. We can promise Mr. Gray that he has only to bring to London some examples of his own work to find not only the League, but the whole intelligent theatre-public open-armed in welcome. We appeal to Mr. Gray, as a protagonist of the modern movement, to give London the chance of seeing this work in actuality. That is the best, the only proper way to influence taste in the direction which he desires.

As to the National Theatre, Mr. Gray is tilting against dreams which at present, alas, only exist in the imagination. But we readily admit that such a National Theatre as we ourselves have envisaged, would be there to serve the interests not of a dramatic cult, however important, but the interests of the theatre as a whole. From this point of view, the National Theatre must be a theatre of the Centre rather than of Right or Left, and it is for this reason that we had no hesitation in approving the architectural plans by Mr. Somerville, which apparently have aroused the wrath of Mr. Terence Gray. It is only right, however, to add that these plans have as yet received no official sanction, and it is as open to Mr. Gray as to anyone else, to voice his criticisms.

Mr. Reilly's criticisms of the League have met with protest from several quarters. The Director of the Unnamed Society, Manchester, writes that their productions have often been illustrated and favourably noticed in *DRAMA*, while "As for the Library" he continues, "I don't know what Mr. Reilly means. We have always been able to get any play we wanted . . . as well as most experimental work turned out at present." We feel that we need add nothing to this "unsolicited testimonial"!

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

"Wonderful Zoo." By F. Sladen-Smith. Sidgwick & Jackson, 3s. 6d.

"U.S.A. with Music." Anonymous. Carrefour Editions, 7s. 6d.

"The Old Folk of the Centuries." By Lord Dunsany. Elkin Mathews & Marrot, 7s. 6d.

"Three Short Plays." By Laurence Binyon. Sidgwick & Jackson, 2s. 6d.

"Four Modern Plays." "The Would-Be Nobleman." Translated by T. Watt. "Miss In Her Teens." By David Garrick. "Two Modern Plays." Nelson Playbooks. 9d. each.

FOR some months now only a very occasional play has come along for review without already having been produced in the West End before publication. I was beginning to wonder whether publishers had lost all faith in the willingness of the amateur to produce full-length plays which have not already been performed on the professional stage. But this month several publishers have evidently decided to give the amateur another chance, and here is a list of books including some really worth-while plays which have not yet been publically performed.

"Wonderful Zoo" and "U.S.A. with Music," both have the same quality in common—the vitality of plays written because the authors have felt certain emotions deeply and vigorously instead of just inventing a neat little "situation" which can be tidily packed into three acts of the standard shape and size and labelled as light and digestible and entirely suitable for consumption after dinner. Mr. Sladen-Smith's one-act plays are so fantastic and decorative that his audiences are apt to taste only the sugar on the pill and swallow it before they have savoured the tang of satire and irony which is in all of them. In this full-length play there is only the thinnest coating of sugar. The story of a lunatic who escapes for a single day, it is fantasy of the most virile sort, a biting satire on life written with a bitterness which sometimes shows itself in an almost embarrassing nakedness. It is a "depressing" play because of its complete cynicism, but it is not a "gloomy" play. It is written with far too much vigour and imagination for that. Like all really good plays, it is first-class entertainment in the very best sense of the word.

Frankly, I am not sure whether "U.S.A. with Music" is a splendidly effective piece of genuinely theatrical writing or merely an expressionistic halla-ballo with all the old characters and effects—the inevitable Mr. Zero, the crowds bawling in chorus and jiggling in unison, the telegraphic dialogue, the captions thrown upon a screen, megaphones, drums, revolvers and all the usual paraphernalia of the expressionistic play. The author frankly admits that the subject-matter is common property, the sort that anyone having access to American newspaper files could take and put together. "The script is non-literary, non-realistic, purely theatrical; the antithesis to a philosophic treatise or an essay on morals." Regarded as a kaleidoscopic and nightmare impression of American life it seems to me, so far as I can judge from merely reading it, a tremendously exciting piece of work, racing along at breakneck speed, the stage

thronged with an amazing variety of types, the action and the dialogue making much of its effect through the insistence on strongly-marked rhythms and constant and exciting changes of tempo. But, as the author himself points out, the accent in "U.S.A. with Music" falls not on "the play is the thing," but on the theatre, the reading a play in print one can never wholly escape from literary standards of criticism. A play like this can no more be judged in an armchair than a symphony can be judged from a glance on the score. In fact, a play of this sort, which depends largely on the emotional effect of rhythm, has much more in common with music than with literature.

I see that Mr. Ivor Brown has bluntly declared that the Christmas theatre-goers are the stupidest and least adventurous of any. The managers evidently share Mr. Ivor Brown's opinion, as otherwise it is incredible that "The Old Folk of the Centuries" should merely be published instead of having been put on for a run during the Christmas season. It is all about a professor who captures a butterfly which he discovers to be really a fairy prince enchained by a witch. But when the butterfly is restored to human form it turns out that this is not a fairy prince after all, but just a grubby little ragamuffin. So he is packed off to a topsy-turvy school where after a series of fantastic adventures he decides he would rather be a butterfly, and returns to the witch to be re-enchanted. This is a captivating play, streaked with poetry as well as fantasy, packed with good fun, and mercifully free from any tinge of the pretty-pretty, sugary sentiment which makes most children's plays such sickly fare.

Mr. Laurence Binyon's three verse plays were written for the Oxford recitations, and require no scenery or properties, though they need simple but beautiful costumes and a producer who understands how to group and move his players expressively. The verse has all the qualities of good stage verse. It is clear and simple, it always comes easily to the tongue, the rhythms are effective and varied, but never over-subtle, and the imagery has the directness which, as poets who write to be read rather than heard, are apt to forget, is an essential quality of verse on the stage, when there is no opportunity for the listener to pause and savour the subtleties and delicacies of the verse. Above all, these plays are entirely free from verbosity. The longest lasts for no more than ten minutes, and the shortest for less than five.

The four books which Mr. John Hampden has added to his series of Nelson Playbooks are remarkably fresh and varied. "Four Modern Plays" includes a new costume play by Mr. Philip Johnson for a cast of six women, and "The Wayside War," to which Mr. Gordon Bottomley awarded the first prize in the Village Drama Society's play-writing competition. This also is a costume play. David Garrick's riotous farce has been freely adapted by W. Graham Robertson and the Moliere has been printed with suggestions for cutting the entire Dorimene-Dorante episode for school performance so that the play lasts only an hour. The last volume contains "Pilgrims," by Rosalind Vallance, and "Enchantment," by Elsie Hayes, two plays for those with a fairly sweet tooth.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Mr. TERENCE GRAY

Sir,

I did not reply to your challenge for a more explicit statement of the League's "misdoings," because I have no wish to be rude to the Drama League. If its members are satisfied with holding the mirror up to the entertainment trade and ignoring the art of the theatre, if they elect to concern themselves almost exclusively with what used to be known as amateur theatricals, it is scarcely any business of mine. I offered an incentive to other things, and that seemed to me to be enough. But since you publish nice little poems about me, I suppose I had better offer to reply, however unpopular I make myself by so doing.

I would contend that the B.D.L. came into existence because the effete trade-theatre failed to supply the dramatic needs of the country. If that is so, then the proper function of the B.D.L. must be to support the modern art of the theatre (that which in the art of Drama corresponds to the modern movement in Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, Music, Dancing, Decoration, etc.), and to assist it in supplanting the theatre that has failed.

Instead of that it would appear that the trade-theatre, realising the growing power of the B.D.L. has, with the tenacity of the dying, succeeded in assembling the B.D.L. committee round its coffin in an endeavour to perpetuate its own fatuity for a further decade.

To take two outstanding examples. The B.D.L. has been attempting to force on the British public a National Theatre wholly in the hands of elderly members of the trade-theatre, a National Theatre which can only be described as a Theatrical Museum, architecturally reactionary, and in which no form of modern or pre-eighteenth century, theatre-art could properly be practised. In foisting this veritable Sarcophagus on the British Public I accuse the B.D.L. of rank dishonesty in that it published the approval of men in almost every walk of life, however little they might know about the theatre, and the critical disapproval of no single person belonging to the Theatre of To-day or — as it is still called in England — the Theatre of To-morrow.

My second example is the League's National Festival. The finals are invariably judged by eminent elderly actors and professional dramatic critics, people whose lives have been passed in the theatre that the League came into existence to supplant, whose traditions and techniques are those that are being superseded, and whose interests are diametrically opposed to those which the Festival was constituted to foster—i.e., the modern art of the theatre which cuts away the ground from beneath the feet of these representatives of a dying form. Thus the modern work is judged by its prosecutors, prosecutors who naturally enough never fail to reveal themselves entirely ignorant of the first thing appertaining to modern theatre-art.

The B.D.L. appears to try to keep up the pretence that the modern art of the theatre is a phrase which has no objective reality, that nobody knows what it is because it has never been seen in the West-end of London. Neither modern architecture nor any other modern art-form, has developed in England, nor will do until it is a commonplace all over the rest of the world, but even that late day is almost upon us. The British public may not yet have had an opportunity of experiencing the revelation of Meierhold, but the B.D.L. at least has no excuse for pretending that it

does not know what it is. The B.D.L. boasts a library, and West-end publishers have done their duty even if West-end managers bring over Moissy in Tolstoy and an oriental imitation of the occidental theatre of the nineteenth century, and leave out Tairof and Meierhold in their international seasons. Moreover the B.D.L. might even find a copy of the Theatre Arts Monthly on its own bookshelves.

As regards the "details of selection" for the trophy I offered, that is a matter which hardly requires public explanation. If the Committee wish it, I will supply the necessary suggestions direct.

Yours faithfully,

TERENCE GRAY.

The Festival Theatre (Cambridge), Ltd.,
Cambridge.

This Correspondence is now closed. For Editorial comment, see page 56

A REQUEST FROM THE BOY SCOUTS

Dear Sir,

May I claim a little of your valuable space to make an appeal on behalf of the above Association, which is affiliated to the British Drama League?

The Chief Scout, Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, has always placed dramatics as a definite part of his scheme of character training, known throughout the World as the Boy Scout Movement.

He has stressed its value:—

- (1) as a means of expression.
- (2) as developing team spirit.
- (3) as a means of inculcating self-control.
- (4) as aiding observation.
- (5) as training the memory.
- (6) as helping imagination.
- (7) as a means of developing artistic capability and handicraft.

This last in the matter of making scenery properties and the like, and finally:—

- (8) as a method of earning funds for the individual Group or Association, when some little experience has been gained.

The members of The British Drama League can help us very materially, if they will, by offering to the local Scout authorities their services in the matter of producers, the loan of costumes, properties, scenery, etc., and in a hundred and one similar matters; nor will such service be without profit, for by assisting the Scout Movement to place its dramatic activities on a higher level, the members of the League will be bringing an appreciation of drama to an organisation which represents 3,53,236 boys, and a total membership (all ranks) of 3,97,648 in the British Isles alone. These figures are taken from the Census, for 1929, and show an increase of 27,000 over 1928.

I shall be pleased to answer any letters, or give any information, regarding the proper authorities to approach in various areas to any Society, which is a member of the League.

Thanking you for allowing me to voice this appeal.

Yours faithfully,

E. STUART MONRO,
Dramatic Adviser The Boy Scouts' Association,
Imperial Headquarters,
25, Buckingham Palace Road,
London, S.W.1.

A NATIONAL DRAMA FOR WALES

UNTIL the end of the nineteenth century Ireland, like Wales and Scotland, had been without national drama in either the native or the English language. Then came the Irish Literary Theatre to be substituted four years later by the Abbey Theatre, managed by the Irish National Theatre Society, whose Irish Dramatic Plays soon became famous throughout Europe and America, and gained for Ireland a place quite unique and distinct in the dramatic history of the century. Irish dramatists walked not only in the paths of Ibsen, Gogol, Tchekhov, Maeterlinck, Shaw, Barrie, Sudermann, Strindberg, but also in paths of their own.

Struggles there were for the establishment of a national theatre, struggles desperate and almost overwhelming against political, religious, civil and financial forces. From the beginning, from the time of the meetings of the Irish Literary Societies in Dublin and London, there was raised the contending cry "The Irish Language or the English Language?" Douglas Hyde urged "The necessity of the De-Anglicising of the Irish Nation," and became one of the founders of the Gaelic League. But Stopford Brooke, in his inaugural lecture to the London Irish Society in 1893, urged "The need and Use of getting Irish Literature into the English tongue." In this lecture may be found what amounts to a manifesto of what afterwards came to be known as the Irish Literary Revival. He, Stopford Brooke, pointed out the use of the English need not necessarily hamper the expression of the Celtic spirit nor interfere with the continuance of the Gaelic tradition. To ensure this, however, it was necessary that Irish writers should work upon the material left to them by their Gaelic ancestors. Pointing to the work to be done he mentioned the translation and publication of the Gaelic texts, the moulding of the mythical cycles into imaginative unities, the treatment in verse of the tales of the ancient heroes and the collection of Irish folk tales and folk songs.

The subsequent development of a distinctive Irish literature in the English language for a considerable time proceeded upon the lines suggested in this lecture. The heroic tales began to be worked upon by poets and dramatists and to be moulded into connected

narratives and there began the systematic collection of folk tales and folk songs which still continues with unabated vigour. Similar work on these lines was being done in Wales and is still being done. But now headed by W. B. Yeats and George W. Russell (AE) a host of writers arose to exploit the rich mine of the virgin poetry of Ireland and to do what Tennyson had done for such legends as King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. So that when the Abbey Theatre was founded in 1904 its keystone had already been fixed by Stopford Brooke.

Names such as that of John M. Synge, with his "The Tinker's Wedding," and the "Playboy of the Western World," mark the epic of the Folk Dramatist.

"The Tinker's Wedding" is as fantastic as Gulliver's Travels and as bitter in its purpose. "The Playboy of the Western World" is Synge's masterpiece and the greatest single play of the Irish Theatre. "In it," says Maxim Gorki,—"in the *English Review*, April, 1924—"The comical side passes quite naturally into the terrible while the terrible becomes the comical just as easily."

Another Folk Dramatist is Lady Gregory. There is nothing in literature quite like her bewildered peasantry. They are the product of the rich Irish humanity, the keen sense of the ridiculous and an unconscious snobbery served with a garnishing of Kilkartan dialect speech. Says Andrew E. Malone, in "The Irish Drama"—"She had the wild mentality of Molière. Her play "The Golden Apple," (1920) challenges comparison with the fantasy of Barrie or Maeterlinck."

Lennox Robinson, with his masterpiece "Whiteheaded Boy," made himself known throughout the English speaking world and put Irish Realistic Drama in the forefront of Realism. Another Realist is T. C. Murray whose play, "Birthright," lays bare the tragic soul of Ireland in 1910. The realm of Fantasy and Symbolism is illuminated by Yeats with his "Land of Heart's Desire," Lord Dunsany with "The Glittering Desire," and Martin, whose "Grangecolman," is suggestive of Tchekhov, the characters having close affinities with the shuffling, negative existence of the people in "The Cherry Orchard."

A NATIONAL DRAMA FOR WALES

By May, 1928, the Irish National Theatre had produced 241 plays by 92 authors, of whom no less than 77 were Irish. In that year, 1927, the Gaelic Drama League was formed, subsidised by the Free State Government and in the season 1927-28, its first year of existence, it actually produced ten new plays in the Irish language as compared with nine of the National Theatre Society in the English language, and today it ranks side by side with the National Theatre Society, thus perfecting the development of Irish Drama—in the English tongue and the Irish tongue.

At the moment Dail Eireann grants a subsidy to the Gaelic Drama League, which produces plays in the Irish language, of £650 per annum, and to the Irish National Theatre Society, £1,000 per annum. One of the conditions on which the Irish National Theatre Society is granted a subsidy is that an additional director is appointed to represent, ex-officio, the Government, his appointment to be nominated by the Minister of Finance. The Abbey Theatre is, therefore, now the only state subsidised theatre in the whole of the English speaking world. Ireland succeeded through Anglicised Irish Drama. Therein lay her success. Wales has pursued the policy of de-Anglicising Welsh Drama. Therein lies her failure.

When Welsh talent is confined in a Sunday school room or an elementary school room, or at best a village hall, how can it survive an amateurial, charitable, first performance.

When the mass of the population—the dock workers and the railway workers, the clerks and typists, the business community, city workers and land workers, doctors, lawyers, the professional classes, the cinema loving young generation, the sporting enthusiasts, and a big proportion of the mining community—the “People”—the “Nation”—do not understand the Welsh tongue what hope is there for National Drama in the Welsh tongue?

When the soil is bitter and acidic, devoid of professional care and nourishment for the seed of the young dramatist, a seed which has no chance of bearing fruit, of ever growing, of ever maturing, one ceases to ask why Welsh Drama has stayed in the ground while Irish Drama has developed into a rich and soulful thing.

What of Anglicised Welsh Drama? There are several “Peasant Comedies.” There is

“The Eve of St. John,” by J. Saunders Lewis, “The Match Maker,” by Betty Eyron Davies, “Birds of a Feather,” by J. O. Francis (first prize Sheffield Mail Play Festival 1930), “John Jones,” by the same author, “The Barber and the Cow,” by Richard D. T. Davies. Excellent laugh producing comedies these plays are. But only Caradoc Evans has won through to the English stage with any measure of fame, with his play “Taffy,” which the Rev. William Evans (Will. Ifan, writing in the “Western Mail”) describes as ‘A Loathsome Play,’ and of which Morgan Jones, M.P., says “‘Taffy’ is a lie. It is vile, vicious, sordid and silly. It is a riotous round of rant and humbug—foul travesty.’ The “Daily Mail” said, “The Characters are figures of farce and there is plenty of fun.” But in the “Jewish Guardian” we read: “Some . . . have seen in his serene detachment a likeness to de Maupassant and others have detected in him a starkness and a poignancy which rank him with the greatest of the Russian writers.” And in the “Daily Telegraph”: “Taffy” is unquestionably the work of a very clever writer. . . . Through the love interest there runs a strain of rare beauty culminating in a scene of exquisite delicacy.” But what are we to think when we read in the “Daily Sketch” (September, 25th 1925): “Wild scenes took place during the performance of “Taffy” at the Royalty Theatre last night. . . . the theatre was turned into a bear garden. At one time it seemed that a free fight would take place with the police. Truncheons were drawn and heads cracked . . . Caradoc’s a Judas!” screamed one woman, and “Take it off!” howled the rest.”

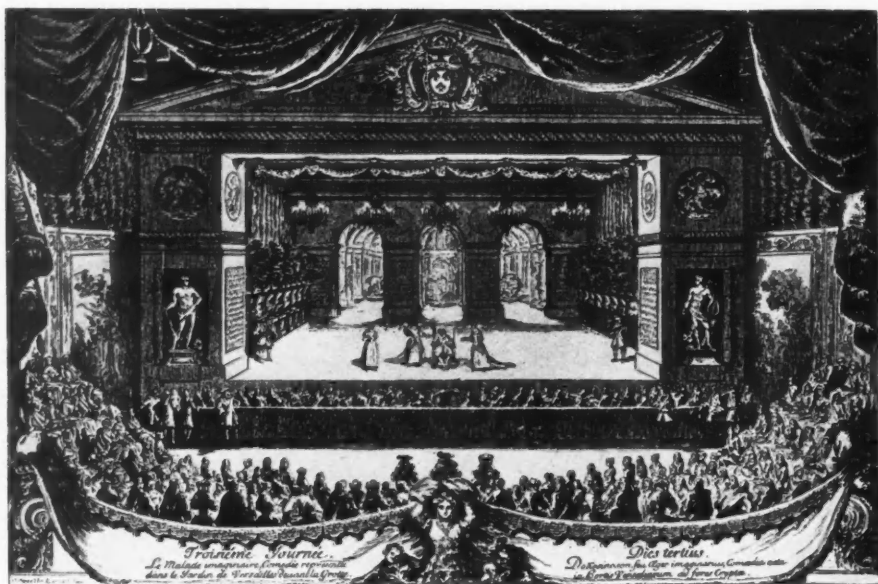
Until the Irish National Theatre Society dispelled the evil fallacy English and American audiences still expected from anything labelled as Irish Drama nothing but the buffooneries of a Handy Andy. The Society proved that Drama to be Irish Drama need not be absurd.

Will someone arise to prove that Anglicised Welsh Drama is not merely the comedy of a capering Taffy? Or will Anglicised Welsh Drama be merely staged to provide a laugh at the Welsh—English jargon of an imaginary Welsh peasant, whose main characteristics are obscenity, meanness and corruption? Mention may be made of the Trecynon Amateur Dramatic Society which



POSTER DESIGN FOR THE GAIR
WILKINSON PUPPET SHOW, AT QUEEN'S
GATE HALL, LONDON, JANUARY, 1931.





SCENE FROM "LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE,"
AS PERFORMED AT THE COURT OF
VERSAILLES IN 1674. REPRODUCED
FROM "MOLIÈRE, HIS LIFE AND WORKS,"
BY JOHN PALMER, PUBLISHED BY G. BELL
AND SONS, LTD.

A NATIONAL DRAMA FOR WALES

through the generosity of one of our great Welshmen, now possesses a "Little Theatre" of its own. Reading in the "Western Mail" (22nd November, 1930), we learn "... The Society is anxious to help the native author. The Society has been forced to stage numerous English plays on account of the paucity of Welsh plays of merit." "We hope to stage several plays a season," the Rev. E. R. Dennis, the producer, states, "And we are willing to give the native author's work a try out." This seems to be the only way in which a standard of amateur play writing in Wales can be raised, and these little amateur theatres must serve as national theatres. That is as far as the scenic theatre is concerned. But now there is an absolutely new stage set for Welsh Drama, a national stage too. We refer to the Broadcasting Station. Here all artificial scenery and lighting effects are dispensed with. Only Dialogue Sound and Music are wanted. The Welsh Wireless Dramatist can leap over all barriers of space and time. By the skillful weaving and interplay of the Harp he can fly from castle to castle, he can present to a million wonder-awed English listeners the romantic tales of the Mabinogion, far better than the Bards of old: he can leave the court of King Arthur at Caerleon or Usk and go, by the mere suggestion of a melody, on to the field of Battle, or by the whisper of the narrator return to the twentieth century Cardiff. The Stage stretches from scene to scene from country to town and town to country, from one end of the world to the other: his peasants, his bards, his kings and princes, heroes, fairies, maidens move anywhere at his will. He can enchant the children of modern Wales with the beautiful Welsh fairy stories, whose delicate fantasy blend so well with the sweet, haunting harp music. For the Stage, the Stage of the Welsh Wireless Dramatist, there is the Ocean and Coal mine, both fraught with drama, tragedy, humour and pathos, there is the teeming city and the quiet countryside, there is the factory and the office, the drawing room and the street, the cafe and the castle. The possibilities are endless. As in Ireland, the Welsh Drama need not be so much an expression of Welsh nationality as of the Welsh view of human nature, reflecting the attitude, the mentality of the Celt. The "Peasant play" is only a stepping-off stone. At last the national stage is

set but where are the Welsh Wireless Dramatists?

RHYS J. WILLIAMS.

A NEW LIFE OF MOLIÈRE

STRANGE how little is known by English people about the life of the greatest comic dramatist of the modern world. Partly, no doubt, this is because so few of us ever have the chance of seeing his plays, even in translation, upon the stage. Yet here is Molière, without doubt the originator of modern dramatic technique as it is practised almost universally to-day.

The story of his life as told by Mr. John Palmer in his book, recently published by Messrs. George Bell and Sons (price 18s. net) is fascinating, not only in itself, but because of the reflection it offers of stage life in France throughout the middle of the 17th century. Molière, born into a respectable bourgeois family, receives a good education, and then disappoints every one by running off with a band of strolling players into the Provinces. He returns to Paris some years later, and there begins the wonderful career in which, both as actor and playwright, he rises to the very height of his profession, and incidentally becomes the founder of the Comédie Française.

Mr. Palmer's book is written both with enthusiasm and with justice, and can be recommended to anyone who desires further acquaintance with one of the most glorious figures in the history of the Stage.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS ORGANISED BY THE LEAGUE

Drama Schools.

St. Ives, April 8th—27th.

London, King's College, April 13th—25th.

Norwich, Maddermarket Theatre, July 27th—August 12th.

Club Room Lecture.

At 8 Adelphi Terrace, "The Stage as a Profession," by Dame May Whitty. Jan. 13th at 5.30

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

BURNLEY GARRICK CLUB

THE Garrick Club inaugurated their new headquarters the Phoenix Theatre, on Tuesday, September 30th, when during an interval in an interesting musical programme, the President (Mr. A. Rought Brooks) expounded the aims and objects of the Club.

He recalled that at the inauguration of the Club last year he suggested that it came within the class of institution which the late Mr. Stocks Massey sought to benefit by his magnificent bequest to the town. The trustees of the bequest could not, however, be persuaded to agree with him. But the directors of the business which Mr. Massey founded had come to the Club's assistance in a way which suggested that they were animated by the same splendid spirit that possessed Mr. Massey himself. The Club's delightful little theatre was the property of Massey's, and though they were under no obligation whatever to do anything of the kind, when the constitution and objects of the Garrick Club were placed before them, the directors at once gave instructions for the place to be painted and papered, and generally put into habitable condition.

"Last year (Mr. Rought Brooks went on) I dealt at length with the question of a Civic Theatre. I suggested that the Town Council might provide a site and the Massey Bequest Trustees an endowment Fund. Since then this subject of a Civic theatre has been brought very much to the fore. Miss Shannon Leslie gave a stimulating address upon it at the Rotary Club, and shortly afterwards at the instance of the Clef Club representatives of various organisations were called together to discuss the question in all its bearings.

Such a theatre was never more needed in Burnley than it was today, for in a few months there would be only one theatre—the Victoria—left. What the ultimate effect of the present wholesale conversion of cinemas and theatres into talkies throughout the country would be it was impossible to say, but last year he was rash enough to venture on a prophesy. He suggested that though for a time the talkie would be all-conquering, its ultimate effect would be to send the public back again to the stage, that they would cease after a time to be satisfied with the simulacrum and would demand the real thing—people instead of pictures, and voices instead of echoes. That prophesy was already being fulfilled.

In Burnley, for a long time at any rate, those who wanted the real thing would be dependent upon the Victoria and upon the amateur companies in the town, and chiefly, if he might say so, upon the Garrick Club, for it was to the Garrick mainly that lovers of the drama would have to turn for plays other than what might be called "commercial plays"—those which involved the least financial risk to produce.

This policy has in the main been followed in the programme arranged for 1930-31. Strindberg's "The Father," John Davidson's "Shadows of Strife," a Chinese play, "The Circle of Chalk," "The Man Who Would Not Go To Heaven," and "The Spinners of Lush," were all plays which it was very unlikely would be produced in Burnley by any professional company. The Club was also out to encourage local talent in the writing of plays, and in January they would produce three one-act plays written by three of the Club's members. This was perhaps the Club's greatest justification."

BOURNEMOUTH.

The Foundation Stone of the Little Theatre of the Bournemouth Dramatic and Orchestral Club was laid by Lord Howard de Walden, on Saturday December 6th. At a subsequent reception in the Town Hall, Lord Howard said that one of the most curious phases of the present day was the growth of amateur dramatic art. "The immense size to which the movement is growing has only begun during the last few years," he said, "and I feel it ought to be a symptom of something. There must be some reason behind it, and I rather hope that the reason is the pleasant one that people are getting a desire to do things for themselves again after a rather long period when they have been rather content to let other people do things for them."

If they wanted to get anything to develop in this country, observed his lordship, it seemed as if they had to do it on the lines of sport. There was this curious difference, however, that whereas in sport one began with amateurs who sometimes became professionals afterwards, in art or the dramatic profession one began with professionals and sometimes the amateurs were developed afterwards. "I hope that the profession will obtain some very valuable recruits from the amateur ranks," said Lord Howard de Walden.

Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth brought good wishes from other societies in the British Drama League, who were watching that venture in Bournemouth with very great interest.

"Very few, if any, have actually built a new edifice in such surroundings as yours will be in Bournemouth," said Mr. Whitworth. "Many of them have adapted older buildings. But here you have the beginnings of a theatre which is right out in the open in one of the finest positions in the town, and are carrying the flag of this amateur dramatic movement into the market place where all can see it and benefit from it. You are really pioneers who are bringing this movement to a status which will not only be extremely good from your point of view, but also from the point of view of amateur art in general."

Mr. George Stone followed and was introduced amidst applause by Sir Dan Godfrey as one who for the last eleven years had rendered the Club service but for which it was very possible they would not have achieved the position in which they were that day.

"THE MAGICIAN,"

NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
DRAMATIC SOCIETY

An entirely local show, this comic opera was written by two students, J. H. West and K. W. Palmer, and composed by Bernard Johnson, Organist of the Albert Hall Wesley Chapel. Both libretto and music are largely Gilbertian and Sullivan-esque, with echoes of "Chu Chin Chow" in parts of the music, which is however tuneful and simple, specially Ernest's song, "England," and the Hornpipe Song.

The plot is rather thin but contains some amusement in the parts of the twin soldiers, well acted by F. Robinson and D. Minette.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

It would be unfair to criticise further as the producer was handicapped by an inadequate stage, and the fact that the band parts only arrived on the morning of production, a fact which ought not to have occurred. Congratulations on the bravery of putting on a new work instead of the everlasting light operas so beloved by amateurs.

THE PEOPLES' THEATRE, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

For its second season in the new theatre acquired a year ago, the Peoples' Theatre Company is modifying its previous policy of presenting a new play every four weeks, and trying the experiment of playing on three nights of *every week*, interspersing new productions with revivals of past successes.

The season opened in October with Shaw's great play cycle "Back to Methuselah," divided for production into four parts, each part played for three nights and the whole play spread over four weeks; this is the second time Shaw's longest and most exacting work has been presented by the company.

The new native plays to be produced include Congreve's "Way of the World," St. John Ervine's "Jane Clegg," and "This Way to Paradise," Campbell Dixon's noteworthy adaptation of the novel "Point Counter Point" by Aldous Huxley.

A future production of much interest is that of "A Hind let Loose," an unpublished play by the late C. E. Montague, of the *Manchester Guardian*, based upon his own novel of the same name, and dealing with the world of journalism and journalists.

Following the past successful policy of presenting plays by foreign dramatists, the present season will see the production of five plays by Continental authors not previously played by the company: "Le Malade Imaginaire," of Moliere; "The Fisher of Shadows," by Jean Sarmet (not previously produced in England); "The Rising Sun," by Heijerman; Gogol's famous farce "The Inspector General," and Tchekov's "Ivanov."

It is intended that each fresh production shall play for six nights at least and if proved attractive will be continued for a further period. The vacant weeks will be filled by such plays as have been well received before such as Quintero's "Hundred Years Old" and O'Neill's "Anna Christie," and thus for eight months the company will be engaged every week in active playing.

This is an ambitious venture for an amateur company entailing, as it does, constant rehearsal and the kindred activities of a Little Theatre, but with an increasing membership of both players and non-players and an ever-growing and widening public willing to receive the kind of play the theatre presents, the company is optimistic that the experiment can be successfully made.

NOTTINGHAM PLAYGOERS CLUB.

Commander Craine, R.N.R., the Naval Playwright, referring to his visit to the Club to lecture, has said: "I was very pleased indeed with the large and attentive audience, and I was particularly impressed with the large proportion of gentlemen in the hall, which is a good sign of virility in A.D.S. work." Coming from such a source, this witness to the good condition of the Club is significant and welcome.

Last month's meetings included a talk on "Our drama since Irving's Day," by Mr. Percy Allen. "The

Poet Laureate as Dramatist," was the subject of a very topical evening, papers being read by two members of the Club, followed by excerpts from Masefield and discussion. During January (apart from the annual fancy dress ball and cabarets), there is to be a Barrie night, Mr. Howard Partington discussing his plays. Sir James has close Nottingham connections, owing to his career having commenced as a writer, on the staff of *The Nottingham Journal* (as also was Cecil Roberts).

Next month we are to have a return visit from the founder of Bath Playgoers Club and his wife, Mrs. Harold Downs, when they are jointly contributing a paper and illustrative excerpts on "George Bernard Shaw."

After the usual vicissitudes due to builders and architects, who never seem able to forecast with accuracy the date when their buildings will be ready, the Club has at last moved into its new quarters in the Blue Triangle Theatre, the stage of which has been specially built to the suggestions of the Playgoers Club Committee. Here there is an excellent stage with most of the desirable requirements, ample accommodation for a large number of people, with dressing rooms, cafe, etc., in a central position, opposite to University College in Shakspeare Street.

This move now makes it possible for the Secretary to enrol new members without restrictions due to previous lack of space, and those intending to join this, now the largest and leading dramatic society in the County, should apply to Mr. Nevil Truman, A.C.A. Moot Hall Chambers, Wheelergate, Nottingham, the subscriptions being a merely nominal five shillings.

There are the usual number of play readings in the programme.

NEVIL P. TRUMAN.

THE NEWTON ABBOT REPERTORY COMPANY.

On December 12th and 13th the Newton Abbot Repertory Company presented for the first time on any stage a new play by its President, Mr. L. du Garde Peach, entitled "Home Fires." It is a study of the effect of the Great War on the family of an English home, the central figure of which throughout the play is the German governess who has been with the family for sixteen years.

"Home Fires" has been described as the complement of "Journey's End." One has an all-man cast, the other an all-woman cast. The scene of one is laid in France and the other at home in London, while a woman at home plays as great a part in "Journey's End" as the man in France plays in "Home Fires."

The play received a most enthusiastic reception from an audience which alternated between laughter and tears. All through the piece the nervous strain was excellently portrayed and this was especially the case with regard to the tension during the Zeppelin raid.

Mr. du Garde Peach, in answering to the call for author, paid a very warm tribute to the sympathetic production of his play by the Company's honorary producer, Mr. James Mason. This is the twenty-seventh new play that the Company has presented out of the eighty-one plays which it has produced since its foundation by Mr. Peach, eight years ago.

The Hon. Secretary (Miss E. Wheeler, Tor View, Newton Abbot), would be glad to receive other plays from dramatists who would like to have their work "tried out" by the Company.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

KEW AMATEUR DRAMATIC SOCIETY

Many of the audience said it was quite a pleasure to see the revival of the old play "DIANA OF DOBSON'S" by Cicely Hamilton, which was produced by the Kew Amateur Dramatic Society at St. John's Hall, Richmond, Surrey, on November 26th, 1930. Though this play is very rarely attempted by amateurs, it is a play that makes a really delightful production. On the whole the parts were admirably taken, and the producer, Mr. Philip Sanders is to be congratulated. The weak spots occurred in the male characters. It is a pity that so few young men in our Dramatic Societies make good stage lovers. The K.A.D.S. leading man was a bundle of nerves and by the time the curtain had dropped on the last act he had arrived at a stage when he seemed to be throwing his arms about in a most unnecessary fashion. But this young man has many good qualities for the stage, and will greatly improve under the careful training given by the K.A.D.S. producer.

VIVIEN D'ARCY.

KING'S COLLEGE DRAMATIC SOCIETY

This Society has recently given a very beautiful performance of Clemence Dane's "Will Shakespeare" in the Great Hall at King's College. One could not help being struck by the sincerity of the players and the skill with which they brought out the beauty of the dialogue in this play. The dresses and settings should also be mentioned as contributing to the undoubted success of the production.

DOUGLASS PLAYERS

The Douglass Players started on a new epoch in their history when they left their Parish Hall and gave a performance in the Century Theatre on November 15th last. The play chosen was "A Hundred Years Old," by Quintero, translated by Helen and Harley Granville-Barker. Great pains had evidently been taken by all concerned in the production, and the play showed a finish and created an atmosphere not hitherto achieved. The general verdict of the audience on leaving the Theatre that this was the best show yet given by the players, was justified.

WITHINGTON AND FALLOWFIELD LIBERAL CLUB DRAMATIC SOCIETY

This Society gave a sincere, if almost too serious an account of Mr. Ernest Enderline's frivolous but also rather spiteful little play "Skin Deep." The play is called a "farical comedy," and a lightness of touch to emphasise the farical element is necessary to its complete success as an entertainment. This lightness of touch was rather lacking on this occasion, owing partly to slowness in taking up cues but the players acted with zeal, if not always with the requisite pace.

Mr. Charles Drapkin was convincing as the very young man enjoying his first adventures in London, and he acted easily and naturally. Miss Daisy Allison as "Olivia" at first marred her performance by inflexibility of voice and facial expression but she improved as she went on.

The stage settings were delightful,—charmingly coloured curtains and gaily painted little doors and windows, the work of the Society's stage staff. The effect was most pleasing to the eye.

D.C.

WATFORD

A triple bill was given by the Watford Dramatic Society of the School of Music on Saturday evening, November 15th, at St. John's Hall, Watford.

The first play, "Dropping the Baby," is one that lays itself open to criticism about the manner of producing. Here it was taken lightly, and in that manner, was quite effective and amusing, though it had a tendency to fall between the two stools of "drama" and "light comedy." Some of the parts, especially that of the lady who *did* drop the baby, were very well played.

The next play, "Michael," was on a higher level altogether. The production was excellent, and all the players took on the atmosphere of the Play, and gave a most interesting and arresting performance, holding the attention of the audience throughout. There were indeed some moments of great beauty in the Play, and Miss Rose Lloyd King, the producer, had evidently thoroughly understood the Play, and had succeeded in getting the sympathy of her cast so that they carried out her ideals. One slight criticism might be made with regard to one or two of the players that if their movements had been not quite so simultaneous, an even greater effect would have been gained.

The third play, "Two Gentlemen of Soho," was amusing and played at a good tempo, and most of the characters had entered into the spirit of the Play.

FAY MYDDLETON.

THE BEC LITERARY INSTITUTE DRAMATIC SOCIETY, BALHAM

On Saturday, December 6th, the above Society presented John Masefield's "The Tragedy of Nan," and G. Bernard Shaw's "The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet." The Society aims at the best and their producer, Charles Diplock, L.R.A.M. (Eloc.) is a man who can achieve something near it.

"The Tragedy of Nan" is a difficult play, and it is open to question as to whether or no it is a good actable play, but very little fault could be found with either the acting or the production which were of a high level. The actors fought against heavy odds in the shape of an audience which, although appreciative, tittered and sniggered at passages of love making or of deep tragedy.

In "The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet," the players again showed good team work and (a strong point of both productions) high elocutionary powers.

A pleasing little orchestra contributed towards the success of a very finished entertainment.

SIDNEY W. BUDD.

THE JOHN LEWIS PARTNERSHIP DRAMATIC SOCIETY

On Monday and Tuesday, October 6th and 7th the John Lewis Partnership Dramatic Society presented "Trelawney of the Wells" at the Rudolph Steiner Hall. The play went with a swing throughout, and each character was cleverly portrayed. The acting in the second act was exceptionally good. After the brisk pace maintained throughout the play the final curtain seemed just a trifle weak, but otherwise I thoroughly enjoyed the whole performance. Mrs. Ewbank who so ably produced the play also took the leading role. Praise must also be given to the orchestra under the direction of Lady Jean Petherick who supplied the music during the intervals.

HEATHER CONWAY.

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